

January 21, 2020

Catherine Racer, Associate Director
Division of Housing Development
Department of Housing
and Community Development
100 Cambridge Street #300
Boston, MA 02114

Paul Bockelman, Town Manager
Town Manager's Office
Town of Amherst
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002

Valley
Community
Development



Building.
Access.
Opportunity.

RE: Amherst Supportive Studio Apartments

Dear Ms. Racer and Mr. Bockelman:

On behalf of Valley Community Development Corporation ("Valley"), I am pleased to submit the attached Project Eligibility Letter (PEL) Application for the above referenced development. Valley seeks PEL review through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program, one of its intended financing sources.

This development responds to a repeatedly articulated local need for permanent, supportive housing for homeless individuals. Because the Town did not wish to segregate its homeless residents, this development will serve a variety of populations at a range of incomes, including 30%, 50%, and 80% AMI.

The Town has demonstrated a strong commitment to this development in the form of three funding awards: an initial \$50,703 CDBG planning grant (already expended) to explore feasibility and identify a site; a \$200,000 CDBG commitment for design / energy efficiency; and a \$500,000 CPA commitment for construction. A letter from the Town is attached.

Because there is strong local interest in the supportive services associated with this development, Valley has taken the liberty of including a draft Supportive Services Plan and Budget with this PEL Application.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions, or require additional information. I look forward to hosting you and / or other DHCD staff for a visit to the site, which we feel is excellent in terms of proximity to services and amenities.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

Joanne Campbell
Executive Director

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Northampton, MA 01060
Holyoke Street Entrance
413.586.5855
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Joanne Campbell
Executive Director

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Building. Access. Opportunity.

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COUNSELING AGENCY

Project Eligibility Letter Application Amherst Supportive Studio Housing

Submitted to: MA Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)

Submitted by: Valley Community Development Corporation ("Valley")

January 2020

The following narrative, along with attachments and the first five sections of the One Stop application, comprise this Project Eligibility Letter Application.

1. Name and Address of Applicant

Valley Community Development Corporation ("Valley")
256 Pleasant Street, Suite A
Northampton, MA 01060

Contact Person: Laura Baker, Real Estate Project Manager
413-586-5855, ext. 100
lb@valleycdc.com

The Applicant is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

Address of the Site and Site Description

The site is located at 132 Northampton Road (aka State Highway Route 9) in Amherst.

The site is just under an acre in size (.88 acres). It slopes gradually east to west and most of the parcel is cleared. Soil tests reveal sandy loam soil conditions absent large rock or ledge. Ground-water is relatively high. There are no wetlands on or adjacent to the site. The site is not within a floodplain nor within an endangered species or critical habitat zone.

It is improved by a single-family house, currently vacant. The house sits to the rear of the parcel and is served by an existing driveway / curb cut from Northampton Road. A structural engineer who evaluated the building estimates it was constructed in the 1930s. Town assessor records date its construction to 1946. It is not an individually significant nor a contributing historic structure. It is not located in an historic district. The house is considerably smaller than neighboring buildings and is believed to have originated as an out-building (carriage house or small barn) of the neighboring house located at 126 Northampton Road, which then was improved into a habitable dwelling. It may be that this conversion to single family residential use is reflected in the assessor records date of 1946.

Utilities available at the site include public water, sewer, and electricity. Hydrant flow tests performed on Orchard Street and Northampton Road demonstrate sufficient water supply and pressure for the domestic and fire protection needs of the proposed development.

There is no natural gas serving this location. The proposed building will primarily (potentially entirely) use electricity for fuel. Domestic hot water may rely upon propane (LPG) if electric hot water production is not feasible. Heating and cooling will be electric.

This site is on a road owned by the MA Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT typically does not permit storm-water from private property to enter its storm-sewer system. Therefore, Valley's civil engineer has designed a preliminary stormwater management system to contain water on site and balance pre- and post-construction storm flow conditions.

Site feasibility studies performed to date include:

- ✓ Boundary and topographical surveys
- ✓ Phase I Environmental Site Assessment & Limited Subsurface Testing (no open Reportable Environmental Conditions). (Full Assessment Report is available upon request.)
- ✓ Hazardous Materials Survey of the House. The house contains lead paint and asbestos. An estimated abatement cost was prepared by an environmental engineer. Abatement cost is included in the construction costs within the Sources & Uses Budget.
- ✓ Soils Test Pits & Soils Analysis. The stormwater management plan was informed by soil analysis results showing sandy loam soil conditions with relatively shallow estimated seasonal high ground water.
- ✓ A Project Notification Form was filed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) for house demolition. The response from MHC was a "no anticipated adverse effect" finding. Valley will follow the municipal demolition review process by submitting an *Application For Permit To Demolish / Request For Historical Commission Demolition Delay Review* to the Amherst Historical Commission.

Locus Maps

Locus maps and photographs of the site and surrounding buildings and features are attached.

The site was selected primarily due to its excellent walkable location and proximity to amenities and services. It is located within ½ mile of Amherst Center and just over ½ mile from two major shopping plazas. It is within ½ mile of several public bus stops and only ¼ mile from a well-used bike trail. The attached locus maps identify the many kinds of services

(shopping, health care, social services, Town Library, and many others) that are within walking distance of the site.

The neighborhood is mixed residential. The site is located at the nexus of three different zoning districts (General Residential, Neighborhood Residential, and Educational) and is itself within the General Residential (R-G) zone. [See zoning map attached.](#)

Immediate neighbors to the property at 132 Northampton Road are:

- Amherst College's Conway Field House and Pratt Field (an athletic field)
- A large single family owner-occupied home that includes commercial use as an Inn / Bed & Breakfast
- Duplex tenant-occupied rental owned by Amherst College

Across Northampton Road are:

- Two-family owner-occupied house
- 6-unit condominium in which all units are rentals; this building contains 14 bedrooms with projected occupancy between 14 – 20 persons; the owner resides out of state
- a single-family home that is for sale

Abutters to the property (Town definition of 300' from the property bounds) include a majority of residential rental units with the largest parcel being the Amherst College fields.

Within this 300' bound:

- Most uses are residential (consistent with the proposed development) and are single or small multi-family buildings.
- The majority of housing units are not owner-occupied (consistent with the proposed rental housing development). Many of the rental properties are owned by Amherst College.

Valley has delineated the primary neighborhood for this proposed development as the Northampton Road corridor between University Drive to the west and the Amherst Town Center to the east. This is the major transit connector and is where future tenants will primarily drive, bike, and walk. The character of this corridor is renter-occupied housing. Of the 45 parcels on this section of road, only 14 (31%) include an owner occupant. Of the total residential units (144) on Northampton Road, only 14 are owner occupied (less than 10%).

While the neighborhood is primarily single and small multi-family houses, there are other densely settled parcels along Northampton Road, such as the Amherst College residence halls. Assessors' records show three residence halls having 18, 27, and 45 bedrooms respectively. Located only 1,100 feet from this site is a 78-unit assisted living facility that contains efficiency, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom rental units, and is home to an estimated 85 seniors.

Northampton Road between University Drive and the Town Center is currently improved with sidewalks along the full length of the north side of the road. On the south side,

sidewalks extend from the Amherst College field, past 132 Northampton Road, and into the Town Center. Plans are currently in process (75% design completion phase) by MA Department of Transportation, which owns and maintains Northampton Road (a State highway), to improve sidewalks on Northampton Road, creating 5' wide walk-ways from University Drive to the Town Center on both sides of the road, and adding two crosswalks with blinking lights at the Orchard and Hazel cross streets. This will place one crosswalk just east of 132 Northampton Road and one just west of the site. (Please also see Locus Maps.)

2. Tabulation of Proposed Buildings:

There is one proposed building. All of the proposed 28 units are rentals. All are studio apartments averaging 235 sf each for typical units and 393 sf each for handicapped accessible units. Each studio apartment includes a kitchenette and bathroom.

Buildings	# of Floors	# of Units	Unit Types	Unit Sizes	Total Square Footage
Multi-unit apartment building	2.5	28	(28) studios (2) of which are handicapped accessible	Average 245 gsf for all units; average 393 gsf for accessible units	10,941 gsf

The building includes an entry / lobby area equipped with mailboxes and an intercom system. The main entry is located at grade and the building includes an elevator for full vertical access. (All units and common areas are visit-able by a person using a wheelchair.) One unit will be equipped for a tenant having a sensory impairment.

Interior common areas include:

- Multi-purpose Common Room
- Accessible public bathroom
- Laundry Room

Other Interior Uses Are:

- Office for use by Resident Services Coordinator (adjacent to Common Room)
- Office for use by on-site Property Management staff

Exterior Features Include:

- Outdoor patio for common use
- Designated areas for gardening
- Designated, separate space for smoking
- 14 parking spaces, including 1 accessible space: plans show seven parking spaces with blacktop surface and seven with grass-pavers

Dumpster enclosure with turn-around for packing truck

Bike Rack

Pedestrian walkway connecting the building to the sidewalk along Northampton Road

3. Name of the Program under which the PEL is Sought:

This PEL application is submitted for approval under the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC), administered in Massachusetts by the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD). Valley anticipates seeking other DHCD sources including: State Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund (MA AHTF), Facilities Consolidation Fund (FCF), and Housing Innovations Fund (HIF). Valley plans to apply initially through DHCD's Supportive Housing funding round for ten MRVPs coupled with supportive services funds for the ten homeless preference units in fall 2020; then apply in the One Stop Rental Round for the balance of DHCD resources, including two additional MRVPs to pair with Facilities Consolidation Fund (FCF) units, in February 2021.

4. Project Details:

Income Restrictions by Unit Type:

# of Units	Unit Size	Income Restriction	Unit / Tenant Type	Proposed Rent	Project Based Subsidy
10	Studio	30% AMI	Homeless preference	\$737	MRVP
2	Studio	30% AMI	FCF (clients of the Dept of Mental Health)	\$737	MRVP
8	Studio	50% AMI	Low Income	\$740	None
8	Studio	80% AMI	Moderate Income	\$795	None

Proposed Rents: Rents include all standard utilities (heat, central air conditioning, hot water, all electricity including stove). Tenants will pay for phone, internet, and cable service separately. Proposed MRVP rents are subject to adjustment in keeping with HUD Fair Market Rents. Non-subsidized rents are subject to adjustment in keeping with cost of living, HUD Income Limits, LIHTC rent limits, and future Market Study findings.

Income Restriction	Current income Max 1 person HH	Income available for housing (35% gross income)	Affordability Range
30% AMI	\$18,650	\$466	0-30% AMI (with rental subsidy)
50% AMI	\$31,050	\$776	43-50% AMI
80% AMI	\$49,700	\$795	51%-80%

Duration of Restrictions requiring Low and Moderate Income Housing: It is expected that this Project will include an affordable housing restriction placed by the Town of Amherst, as well as one or more from funding agencies. The period of affordability is expected to be 99 years (or “in perpetuity”).

Supportive Housing: The proposed development includes supportive services for vulnerable tenants. Although not required as part of the Project Eligibility Letter application, because this is an integral part of the development and a topic of interest to neighbors and abutters, the **draft Support Services Plan and draft Services Budget** are included as an attachment.

Limited Dividend Status of Applicant: The applicant for this Project (Valley) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The ownership entity for the Project is expected to be a Limited Partnership including the tax credit investor(s), in which Valley serves as the General Partner.

Local Support: This site was identified and early feasibility work was paid for using a CDBG planning grant from the Town of Amherst. The Town has articulated the need to create housing for homeless and other low income persons within the following documents:

Amherst Community Development Strategy (CDS)

This project is consistent with the Town’s CDS which states: “The focus of many in the community is the extreme need for housing for the non-student population, in particular, low- and moderate-income households and permanent supportive housing, including enhanced single room occupancy (ESRO) units, for extremely low-income (ELI) people and those transitioning out of homelessness.” In its CDS list of Priority Projects, #1 is: “Create affordable and fair housing options (rental and ownership) for the chronically homeless and extremely low income, low- and moderate-income families, individuals, seniors and the disabled that includes the purchase, renovation or construction of housing and associated infrastructure.”

Housing Trust Strategic Plan FY 18-22, which identifies the need for: “Smaller affordable units for individuals, including persons now accommodated in the shelter” (p. 8)

Housing Production Plan, 2013, lists among its priorities:

“Housing for at risk and special needs populations.

Housing should continue to be developed to serve those who are at risk of homelessness and/or have special needs that require supportive services. Providing stable and affordable opportunities for those transitioning out of shelters or special programs remains a high priority.” (p. 59)

Local support is further demonstrated by an additional commitment of \$200,000 in CDBG funds for design and \$500,000 in CPA funds for project implementation. **(Please see Town commitment letter attached.)** When neighbors wrote to the Town Council to express

concerns relative to this development, it prompted an outpouring of support letters and press from the wider community and, most recently, from students at Amherst College.

The extensive amount of discussion led to the Town establishing a web page for this project. See <https://www.amherstma.gov/3489/Northampton-Road-Project>.

The following items documenting extensive community discourse—both critiques and support—related to this proposed project are attached:

Compilation of letters submitted to Town Council as appear on Town website

Press related to the proposed development from local papers

Articles written by Amherst College students that appeared in the student newspaper

In April 2019, Valley sponsored a meeting for abutters, living within 300' of the property. Valley also met with the following local persons or groups during the course of project planning:

- Abutters and neighbors individually or in small groups
- Town Councilors
- Town Finance Committee
- Community Preservation Act Committee
- CDBG Advisory Committee
- Amherst Housing Authority Board
- Board of Craig's Doors
- Amherst Community Connections
- Amherst Homeless Systems Group
- Town Planning Department & Town Manager
- Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust
- Amherst Affordable Housing Coalition
- Amherst College Administration
- Amherst College Campus Police
- The Interfaith Housing Corporation
- Amherst Historical Commission

In June 2019, Amherst Town Council sponsored an Open Meeting of Residents with this proposed development as the sole topic. This meeting was attended by more than 80 persons.

Although many of the abutter and neighbor concerns are reflected in the attached letters, the table below highlights some primary concerns, as well as Valley's response (as of the current phase of planning) to these concerns. As is typical, changes to the project may be a byproduct of the zoning approval process.

Community Concern or Request	Valley Response at Current Phase of Planning
At 28 units, this development is too dense; there are too many units.	Valley created alternate budgets for fewer numbers of units, but found these created negative impacts by reducing revenue for on-site staff and jeopardizing the long-term financial sustainability of the housing. Valley notes that current R-G zoning would permit construction of 7 units at this particular site given the lot size. Were these to be 7 four-bedroom units, it would create the same level (or more) of per capita density as the proposed development.
The building has too many stories: counting the ground floor and attic, there will be 4 living levels.	Revised plans reduce the living levels to three: (1) the ground floor / walk-out basement level; (2) the first floor; and (3) the second floor. Units have been removed from the attic area. The proposed development has the same number of living levels as the existing house, which has a finished bedroom and bathroom in the walk-out basement level; living spaces, including a bedroom, on the 1 st floor; and 3 bedrooms on the 2 nd floor.
Provide more on-site services	Valley has increased both the budget (from \$25,000 per annum to \$45,000 per annum) for the Resident Services Coordinator and the expected number of on-site hours (from 20 per week to 27.5 - 30 per week).
Provide a live-in manager	Valley interviewed providers of similar housing as well as those with live-in managers. We found that live-in managers are most common at larger developments and at those housing developments serving more vulnerable populations (i.e. frail seniors, unaccompanied homeless youth; homeless persons with tri-morbidity, etc.). Live-in managers are not typical at the proposed type of housing and Valley concluded this is not the best use of resources at this property. At the Open Meeting of Residents in June, former tenants as well as service providers argued that these adult tenants do not want nor do they need overnight supervision. This is housing for individuals who can live independently with supports.
Provide more specifics about how services will be delivered and by whom	A detailed, draft Supportive Services Plan is attached that defines roles and documents commitments from a variety of community-based providers.
Build family housing rather than single person housing at this location	This development is a response to a specific, clearly articulated need by the Town to house homeless individuals in a non-segregated manner. Valley searched for properties in Amherst for more than 2 years to identify this site to respond to this particular need.

Include a mix of unit sizes	Valley prepared budget scenarios for a building that had fewer overall units—reduced number of studios and added one-bedroom units—with the same total number of bedrooms. On both the construction and operating side, these budgets did not prove viable. Reduced total revenue had a negative impact on Valley’s ability to provide on-site services.
Create more separation / buffer between the proposed building and the Amherst College’s Pratt Field	The existing house’s rear porch is located within 10’ of the rear property boundary with Pratt Field. The prior plan (which re-used a portion of the existing house) would have increased this separation to 16’ by removing the rear porch. Revised plans attached to this application increase the separation to 30’-6” by removing the existing house entirely and shifting the new building north. This added space increases the buffer to plant a more robust vegetative screen. This will enhance privacy for tenants living at 132 Northampton Road and will provide a better visual and sound buffer between Pratt Field and the new building.
Constructing the proposed development will adversely impact surrounding property values	Valley provided several studies for neighbor review that demonstrate construction of affordable housing does not negatively impact surrounding property values.
Construction of the development will result in closure of Pratt Field for public use by Amherst College because tenants are likely to create incidents on the athletic field	Amherst College has stated it does not foresee closure of Pratt Field to public access as a consequence of the proposed development. As is the case for anyone who creates an incident on Amherst College property currently, Campus Police will respond case by case and, as they now do, may trespass an individual and not allow that individual access to the campus.
Will this property pay real estate taxes?	Yes. Valley has consulted with the Town Assessor to estimate the after-construction valuation of the development. It is expected that annual property taxes will be about 4 times the current amount.
Northampton Road is too dangerous for tenants on foot. It is not safe to cross and the sidewalk does not extend all the way to University Drive on the south side of Northampton Road.	Valley believes its adult tenants will be able to safely cross Northampton Road and make use of available sidewalks in the same way that other current residents of all ages do. In addition, the planned improvements to Northampton Road by MA DOT will widen, improve, and extend the current sidewalks. There will be continuous sidewalk from the property to University Drive on the south side of Northampton Road. There will be safe crossing locations (crosswalks with lights) both to the east and the west of 132 Northampton Road.
Tenants will disproportionately use emergency services (police, fire, ambulance). This will be a cost burden to the Town and a disruption	Extensive analysis of call data at Valley’s other properties, as well as other multi-family Amherst properties, show that there is no enhanced danger or threat to neighbors. Valley believes that its current tenants do sometimes use 911 for non-emergency

or hazard to neighbors. The level of 911 calls at Valley's comparable Northampton properties indicate that those tenants have unmet needs.	situations. We plan to reduce this kind of use at 132 Northampton Road through enhanced on-site staff and coordinated service provision. The majority of 911 calls from comparable properties are emergency medical calls. The attached Supportive Services Plan demonstrates the wealth of medical services and supports that are within walking distance of, or nearby to, 132 Northampton Road. Tenants who can easily access preventative and urgent care will use fewer emergency services. Presently Amherst Police report that 12% of their call volume relates to homeless persons. By housing some of these persons, overall call volume to the Police Department may decrease.
Tenants will disable smoke detectors in order to smoke in the building. This will create a fire hazard.	The proposed building will be equipped with state of the art hard wired fire alarm systems and full building sprinklers. In the case of hard-wired fire and smoke alarm systems, any disruption or tampering will cause the alarm to sound and therefore the issue will be immediately identified and addressed.
Shift any potential designated tenant smoking area away from the track.	Valley proposes that this will be a non-smoking building. We considered designating the grounds non-smoking as well, but, based on past experience, this can result in tenants smoking on the public sidewalk directly in front of the property, which can be an undesirable outcome for neighbors and other pedestrians. Plans currently show a bench as the only approved smoking location on site. This is separated from the common use outdoor patio, from the track, set away from the building and building windows, and separated from the closest residential neighbor at 126 Northampton Road. Smoking secession supports will be available on-site to tenants.
Allow tenants to have overnight guests	At its other single person properties, Valley does not permit overnight guests due to the very small size of the units and as a way to control building entry and increase tenant safety. Valley will explore a revised policy that allows overnight guests with limitations—for example tenants might be able to have a guest for up to 3 nights with prior notice to Property Management. Should overnight guests prove disruptive or unsafe, Valley reserves the right to adjust this policy, as needed.
Relocate the driveway from its current location (far east side of the property) to the far west side of property adjacent to Amherst College	Valley explored this relocation with the MA Department of Transportation (DOT), which owns and maintains Northampton Road, which is a State highway. MA DOT did not recommend moving the driveway to the far west side of the property, as it could create traffic congestion (and consequently less safe vehicular conditions) due to closer proximity to the College parking entry and to the intersection of Dana Street with

	Northampton Road. MA DOT did advise the driveway should be moved slightly to the west so that the apron radius was within the property bound. This is how the driveway is now shown on plan.
Improve the visual and sound buffer between the proposed building and the immediate residential neighbor	Valley proposes installation of a solid cedar fence (6-8' in height) along the full boundary separating the two properties. Fence will be installed on Valley property as close to the property line as permitted by zoning bylaw. In keeping with neighbor preference, the existing row of tall evergreens located on the property line will be removed to allow planting of evergreen, understory plants to provide improved visual and sound buffer. Valley is offering to provide funds for this neighbor to plant additional vegetative screening on their property also along this fence line, should they so choose.
Relocate parking area from the east side of the property to the west side and / or in front of the building to mitigate noise and dust for immediate neighbor	Due to grading and storm-water management constraints, Valley is not able to make this change in the location of the proposed parking. The parking has been shifted approximately 14' farther from the eastern boundary in the current site plan.
There is insufficient parking provided	Valley's initial goal for parking at this property was .25 - .5 spaces per unit. Current site plan achieves .5 spaces per unit. This number is consistent with Valley's experience for parking demand at other properties with low income tenants that are situated in walkable locations.
Relocate the main building entry farther from the eastern side of the property to mitigate sound	The main entry of the current house faces east and is located on the far eastern side of the building. In the current plan, the main entry is no longer located on the eastern end of the building. It is located within the elbow of the L-shaped building and is farther to the west.
Make the building easily accessible to persons with disabilities	The prior plan relied upon a long ramp for wheelchair users to access the building. The revised plan uses principles of "universal design" so that entry for all users is at grade and no ramp is needed. Interior stairs and an elevator allow access vertically to reach all building levels. All indoor and outdoor common areas are accessible. All walkways meet universal design guidelines. An accessible parking spot is situated close to the building's main entry.
The project is too expensive	This past summer, Valley provided a number of comparables to show that the former budgeted project cost (approximately \$172,000 total development cost per unit) was low. In the current budget, the total development cost per unit has increased to approximately \$265,000. This is due to several factors: (1) there is notable escalation in construction labor and

	materials costs; (2) we anticipate this escalation will continue during the time we are planning this project; (3) the high levels of energy efficiency we seek to meet, including use of PV solar panels, add expense; (4) increasing funding for the Resident Services Coordinator is accomplished by establishing a Capitalized Services Reserve within the development budget—this adds to the development cost; (5) meeting community and neighbor design requests has added costs; (6) all of the above cost increases caused Valley to change the financing approach for this project. Current budgets include use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Using this source results in other soft costs, particularly legal costs and construction loan interest, to increase.
The Town has committed money to the project. Will it be asked for more money at a later time?	Even though the overall project cost has increased, Valley does not anticipate asking the Town for more financial resources.

5. Conceptual Design Drawings:

Preliminary plans are attached including: existing site conditions, preliminary site plan, schematic floor plans, elevations, and 3-D renderings.

Tabulation of Land Uses for proposed development:

Land Occupied by Buildings: 9.78%

Land Occupied by Parking and Other Paved Areas: 31.85%*

Total Impervious Area: 31.98%*

Open Space: 65.5%

Number of Parking Spaces: 14

Parking Ratio: .5 spaces per unit

**some "paved" areas use impervious materials: grass pave (2,838 sf) and porous walk-ways (857 sf)*

6. Narrative description of approach to building massing, relationship to adjacent properties, and exterior building materials:

The design inspirations for the proposed building are the traditional residential halls on the Amherst and Smith College campuses. Valley's goal is that the building clearly present as a residential structure and blend with the traditional architectural style of its neighbors. One building directly next door (the Conway Field House at Pratt Field) is a new structure

(constructed in 2013), however, it is built in a traditional style using traditional materials (brick and stone).

As can be seen in the photographs of the immediate area, most other residential properties are traditional / Victorian in form.

The proposed architectural plans make use of the sloped site to minimize the mass of the building, since a portion of the building is below grade. Mixed materials help to reduce overall mass, as do articulated building facades, and a varied, complex roofline incorporating traditional roof pitches.

Exterior materials that are traditional in style have been selected, including brick or stone cladding for the ground-floor level and clapboard or shingles (Hardi material) for upper stories. Classic 2 over 1 double-hung windows and architectural asphalt shingles are shown.

Trim details at the entry porch and front porch add to the traditional appearance. Trim details on the building (wide corner boards, wide rake board, differentiated upper window trim and wide frieze trim) are also shown.

The specific trim details, exterior siding textures, and final building colors will continue to evolve as the design advances with the goal of building a structure that, while not pretending to be historic, is consistent in style with its surroundings.

Other design goals include a high level of energy efficiency, use of sustainable materials, and healthy indoor air quality.

Examples of sustainable materials likely to be used include: cementitious board siding (aka Hardi panel); cellulose or mineral wool insulation. Healthy indoor air quality will be achieved through (1) elimination of materials that produce unhealthy off-gases (for example, press board, certain glues in plywood, etc.); non-VOCs paint will be specified; and (2) a mechanical fresh air exchange system (HRV or ERV) serving every dwelling unit and common area.

Energy efficiency and low carbon footprint is expected to be achieved through: compact, efficient use of space; building envelope with high R-values of insulation; energy efficient double-pane windows with low U values; use of HRV (Heat Recovery Ventilator) or ERV (Energy Recovery Ventilator) for mechanical fresh air; use of highly efficient HVAC system (Variant Refrigerant Flow mini-split system is anticipated); use of Energy Star appliances; and energy efficient LED lighting. As budget permits, Photo voltaic solar panels maximizing roof surface will be included.

By locating this building in a highly walkable location, in close proximity to services, shopping, medical facilities, the bike trail, and multiple bus stops, the number of tenants who own cars, and the number of vehicular trips per day, will be minimized. This reduces energy use associated with the property.

Relationship to Adjacent Properties:

Scale: The scale of the proposed building was planned to be in keeping with immediate neighbors. At 10,941 gsf excluding the attic, it is smaller than one immediate neighbor, the Conway Field House at Pratt Field (over 17,000 gsf), and larger than its other immediate neighbor, 126 Northampton Road (8,051 gsf excluding the attic). It is larger than the single family homes in the neighborhood and proportionate to a 6-family building across the street (8,666 gsf). Its height is in keeping with neighboring buildings. Although the proposed building will be taller than the existing house, it will have the same number of living levels (i.e. finished basement, 1st floor, and 2nd floor).

Location on Site: Like the existing house, the proposed building is situated toward the rear of the property. This creates a buffer from the traffic noise along Northampton Road and enhances the streetscape by preserving much of the existing green space adjacent to Northampton Road. The front of the proposed new building is set back more than 100' from Northampton Road.

Landscaping: Currently much of the site is grassy lawn. There are scattered small fruit trees and a row of overgrown evergreens screening the house from Northampton Road. The proposed site plan will improve the quality of landscaping on the property by removing the overgrown evergreens blocking the house and planting a variety of trees and shrubs. In keeping with neighbor preference, we propose removing the row of spruce trees along the driveway, located on the property line. In their place, a privacy fence, and other lower growing screening vegetation will be planted.

Density: As is often the case with affordable housing development, the proposed project is denser than surrounding uses. Because each unit within the proposed development is very small and intended for single person occupancy, Valley compared the density of the proposed development with the density of bedrooms in other properties along Northampton Road. Density at these properties ranged from a low of 1.21 bedrooms per acre to a high of 62.90 bedrooms per acre, with a median of 10.56 bedrooms / acre. The proposed development is 32 bedrooms per acre.

Most surrounding properties have fewer units than the proposed development. Early in project planning, Valley's architect prepared conceptual "fit tests" for the site. Please see attached. The purpose of these fit tests was to determine how many units could be

constructed on the site. Given the site is almost an acre, relatively level, with no unbuildable areas, fit test revealed that as many as 50 or more small studio units could be constructed if site were “built out” to its full potential. Because this size of building and density felt out of proportion to the area, Valley selected a smaller build-out of 28 units, with an overall building square footage and number of bedrooms closer to neighboring properties.

Parking and Traffic Patterns

Based on parking demand at similar properties, Valley’s goal was to create between .25 and .5 parking spaces per residential unit. The current site plan shows 14 spaces (.5 spaces / unit). Valley believes this amount of parking is adequate given that 12 of the 28 residents will be extremely low income and not likely to afford a car. The remaining residents will also have limited income and a proportion of these will not own a car. The location, with services, amenities, bus stops, a bike trail, and more within walking distance is well suited for those travelling by foot, bike, or bus.

The volume of traffic passing this site is very high. Northampton Road is a State highway and the main travel route between Amherst, Hadley and Northampton. The addition of cars from the planned development will not have a measureable impact on the existing heavy flow of traffic. Valley conducted a preliminary consultation with a Traffic Engineer regarding site lines and these were assessed as being adequate. A Traffic Study may be requested by the Zoning Board of Appeals as part of their permit review process.

7. Tabular Analysis of Zoning Waivers

The site is Parcel 14C-8, located in the R-G (General Residence) Zone.

The Town of Amherst zoning bylaws define the R-G zone as follows:

Article 2.01

R-G General Residence. The purpose of the R-G District is to provide for residential neighborhoods of medium to higher density in areas both near the Town Center and between the University and the Town Center. Such areas are convenient to the services, facilities, institutions and/or employment opportunities provided in the Town Center or by the University.

As the Town zoning description notes, this zone has medium to higher density and is close to services, institutions, and employment opportunities.

Valley anticipates requesting waivers to the zoning bylaw sections listed in the table below. These are the only waivers anticipated at this preliminary stage of plan development, but

may be subject to change at the time of zoning permit. Valley anticipates the proposed building will comply with most of the Town's bylaws and dimensional requirements including: those related to driveways; maximum number of building floors; maximum building height; basic minimum lot size; basic minimum lot frontage; minimum front, rear, and side set-backs; and maximum building coverage (%).

AMHERST ZONING BYLAWS	REQUIREMENTS	ANTICIPATED WAIVER REQUEST
ARTICLE 3: NUMBER OF APARTMENTS		
3.323	Apartments: no fewer than 3, nor more than 24 dwelling units allowed in apartment buildings (allowed by Special Permit in Zone R-G).	Allow Apartment Building having 28 dwelling units.
	No more than 50% of units can be of any one size (# of bedrooms). In buildings where all units meet the definition of affordable, the permitting authority can waive this requirement.	Grant waiver to allow all units to be the same size (# of bedrooms) because, in the proposed development, all units meet the Town definition of affordable (reserved for tenants whose income is at or below 80% AMI), per Section 12.25.
TABLE 3 DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS: NUMBER OF UNITS PER LAND AREA		
Table 3	Basic lot minimum = 12,000 sf; plus 4,000 sf for each additional unit for apartment	Allow 28 studio units on .89 acre lot (38,253 sf).
	Max lot coverage is 40%, including pervious and impervious materials	Current site plans have 41.64% lot coverage, of which 31.98% is impervious. Site planner continues to seek ways to reduce lot coverage. However, if this is not possible, applicant may seek a waiver.
ARTICLE 6: FENCES		
6.24	Fence height cannot exceed 6' on a side lot.	Applicant may seek waiver for a higher fence along the east side of the property to accommodate neighbor preference.
ARTICLE 7: PARKING		
7.000	2 parking spaces required for each dwelling unit	Waiver request for reduction in parking to .5 spaces per dwelling unit

8. Evidence of Site Control

Valley has Site Control via deed simple ownership of the property. (See deed attached.) Valley acquired the property in January 2019 using an acquisition loan from the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC).

It is not typical for Valley to acquire a site this early in planning. However, Valley had been seeking an appropriate site in Amherst for a supportive housing studio apartment development for several years and found that the competitive local market demanded early acquisition. Offers Valley made on other properties were rejected in favor of buyers who could acquire more expediently.

9. Copy of Valley's By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation

These documents are attached.

10. One Stop

The first five sections of the One Stop are attached as drafts. A 21- year operating pro forma is also supplied.

11. Supportive Services

Although not a required element of the PEL application, a draft Supportive Services Plan is attached, as the sufficiency of services has been a main point of discussion in the community.

12. Need and Demand for the Proposed Housing

There is currently no comparable type of housing in Amherst. By applying varied income tiers and tenant preferences, the proposed development will help meet several critical housing needs.

Housing for Homeless Individuals:

There is a profound need for housing for homeless persons. The only homeless shelter in Town, Craig's Doors, is a seasonal shelter located less than a mile from the project site. When the shelter closes for the season each spring, many of the shelter guests have no place to live and are found sleeping on the streets, in ATMs, in the parking garage, or in tents behind public and private buildings.

The need for affordable housing for ELI and homeless individuals is documented in the

Town's current (2013) Housing Production Plan. Unmet housing needs are identified as follows: 1,970 units for ELI households, 505 for VLI households, and 575 for LMI households, as well as 15 for persons who are homeless. The Plan sets the production goal to address these needs at 200 affordable rental units over the coming 5 years (for ELI, VLI, and homeless).

Data provided by Craig's Doors documents the characteristics and needs of homeless individuals. During three shelter seasons (2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14) the shelter provided beds for between 143 and 161 individuals each season totaling 2,800 - 4,100 bed-nights. Of shelter guests, 48% had a history of mental illness, 45% had a history of substance abuse, and 41% were physically disabled.¹

During the 2017-2018 season, Craig's Doors shelter served 172 unique guests (131 men and 41 women) who stayed an average of 10-30 nights. There was an increase from the prior year in the number of nights when people were turned away from the shelter due to lack of space. Guests served self-reported the following: 26% had a chronic health problem; 63% had a mental health problem; 22% had a physical disability; 31% reported substance use; 38% reported alcohol use; 35% reported a history of domestic violence; 26% reported a dual diagnosis; 11% had a developmental disability.²

This development will allow currently homeless individuals to enter stable, permanent housing and improve their ability to address other major life challenges. It will provide on-going supportive services so that, once housed, these tenants will retain their housing and prevent future incidents of homelessness. At Valley's homeless preference units located in Northampton, typically 95-100% of homeless tenants retain their tenancy after one year.

Without appropriate supportive, low-cost housing, homeless individuals will have shortened life-spans and a higher social cost in terms of other public services (hospitalization, emergency response, and police services).

Housing for low and moderate income individuals:

Census data reveals that 15% of Amherst renter households are "cost burdened" (pay more than 30% of income for rent; while an extremely high 45% are "severely cost burdened" (pay more than 50% of income for rent). This is compared to only 14% of owner households who are cost burdened and 5% who are severely cost burdened.³

According to its 2016 Annual Report, the Amherst Housing Authority reports that as of March 31, 2016 there were a total of 2,457 waiting list applicants for its affordable rental units. Of these, 381 were applicants for elderly/disabled housing and 1,874 applied for family housing.

¹ Present, Past, and Future of the Amherst Seasonal Homeless Shelter, a Preliminary Report of the Amherst Housing & Sheltering Committee, December 2014

² Data from Craig's Doors Staff (Jade Lovett)

³ US Census ACS 2013-2017

Of the total, 1,199 applicants are seeking a one-bedroom apartment.⁴ The Housing Authority also cites over 800 applicants on a centralized Section 8 waiting list that have a local preference for Amherst.

At two private affordable housing rental developments in Amherst (Olympia Oaks and Butternut Farms) there are more than 200 applicants on waiting lists for one-bedroom apartments.⁵

Way Finders, Inc. maintains a regional waiting list for its Section 8 mobile voucher program. As of December 2016 there were over 28,000 applicants on this list, with applicants from 2004 receiving current vouchers (a 14 year wait).

In nearby Northampton, Valley's current Wait List for similar small studio apartments is more than 152 applicants.

Market Rate Housing:

A review of apartments listing in January 2020 on Craig's List shows studio apartments in Amherst range from \$950 (basement studio) to \$1,600 per month for rent. One-bedroom units range from \$950 to \$1,950 per month. In most cases, rents do not include utilities. The proposed project has self-pay rental units priced at \$740 to \$795 including heat, central air conditioning, hot water, and electricity. While the proposed studios are smaller than a typical studio unit, there do not appear to be comparably priced units in the unrestricted housing market in Amherst.

The three institutions of higher education located in Amherst (UMass, Amherst College, and Hampshire College) are large employers within the region. While these institutions provide some student housing and, in some cases, faculty housing, they generally do not provide housing for staff. Many employees (lower level administrative, grounds, maintenance, dining services, janitorial, adjunct faculty) commute to Amherst due to lack of affordable housing. The proposed project, with 80% AMI units having an income cap of \$49,700, will fill a critical need for workforce housing in Amherst.

Market Study:

A third party Market Study will be prepared at the time of application for State financing. Proposed rents for self-pay units (50% and 80% AMI units) may be adjusted in keeping with findings from the Market Study.

⁴ The Housing Authority does not have SRO units, or efficiencies, so one-bedroom units are the closest comparable.

⁵ There are no SRO units, or efficiencies, in these two developments, so one-bedroom units are the closest comparable.

ATTACHMENTS

Locus Maps

Photos of Site and Surroundings

Zoning Map

Draft Supportive Services Plan & Draft Budget

Town Letter of Commitment

Compilation of Community Letters

Local Press Related to the Development

Compilation of Amherst College Student Letters

Existing Conditions Survey

Preliminary Site Plan

Preliminary Architectural Plans

Fit Tests

Site Control: Property Deed

Valley By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation

One Stop in Excel – First 5 Sections Complete

Operating Pro Forma – 21 years